

TRAINING TIMES

Vol. 1 Nr. 25

Grafenwoehr, Hohenfels and Vilseck

December 21, 2005



VFW holiday cheer for orphans

See page 6

News in brief

Postal rates going up

The U.S. Postal Service has announced that rates and fees will increase by approximately 5.4 percent, effective Jan. 8.

This increase is the first since 2002. Among the adjustments, the 1-ounce, single-piece rate for first-class mail will increase from 37 cents to 39 cents, and the postcard rate will increase by one cent, to 24 cents.

For additional postal information, visit the USPS website at <http://www.usps.com/ratecase> or the USAREUR Postal Operations Directorate website at <http://www.1perscom.army.mil/pod>.

Security Augmentation Forces

3rd Bde Vilseck is providing Soldiers to serve as Security Augmentation Forces for the Graf and Vilseck communities. These Soldiers are identified by the black armband (SAF) and wear Battle Dress Uniforms, Kevlar, Body Armor, and M-16 rifles.

The presence of these patrols around your areas should not be cause for alarm, and are only conducting normal routine patrol schedules during all hours of the day and night. Tenant units perform the duties of SAF, formerly known as Random Antiterrorism Teams, as Soldiers are available in the community and are meant to enhance our Force Protection Posture.

For questions or concerns on the SAF, please contact DPTMS Force Protection at 475-8826.

Don't use Salt to De-ice Sidewalks

Bavarian Law and USAG Grafenwoehr policy do not allow the use of salt for the de-icing of sidewalks. USAG Grafenwoehr DPW has procured and keeps on stock an environmentally friendly deicing product, which will be used in lieu of salt on post and in GRHP and Built-to-Lease (BLT) Housing. It is available in the DPW Self Help stores for on post, GRHP and BTL residents.

POSH training mandatory

All civilian personnel in the IMA-E Region, to include military service members that supervise civilian employees, must complete this refresher training for FY 2006. All new employees that have not taken the initial classroom training must do so prior to participating in this on-line course. To schedule initial POSH training, please contact Ms. Josie Hammond at 475-7215 or josie.hammond@us.army.mil.

<http://training.newmedialearning.com/psh/usarmymiae/message.htm>

Chapel needs child care workers

The Vilseck Chapel is looking for watch-care workers to provide on-site child care for infants to 4-year-olds during religious events. This is a non-personal service contract position. You must be at least 18 to apply.

Please contact the Vilseck Chapel.
POC: Jamie Seel at DSN 476-3340.

It's 'Bavarian News'

Survey spurs new name for newspaper

by Kathleen Gibbs

USAG Grafenwoehr Public Affairs Officer

The USAG Grafenwoehr Public Affairs Office recently surveyed the *Training Times* readership to find out what the readers do and don't like about the newspaper.

Included in the survey was a request for respondents to help choose a new name. The survey results on the name of the paper were spread across the spectrum of possible answers, but one winner emerged: *The Bavarian News*.

"I am pleased with the new name," said Col. Brian T. Boyle, Commander, USAG Grafenwoehr. "We were hoping for a name that would be inclusive and yet distinctive to our area," he said, "and *The Bavarian News* is just that."

"The *Tower View* was the runner-up in the name contest, but new information makes that choice not as good as *The Bavarian News*," said Nick D'Amario, command information chief and acting editor.

The new information is that the USAG Grafenwoehr newspaper will begin servicing more than the Grafenwoehr, Hohenfels and Vilseck communities. According to the IMA-E PAO, the Grafenwoehr newspaper will also host the pages of the Ansbach, Bamberg and Schweinfurt communities beginning sometime in 2006. "So having our paper named the *USAGG News*, for example, would have meant that we might have needed to change our name *again* when that occurred," he added.

As far as other portions of the survey were concerned, the readership is pretty satisfied with the coverage.

Our average reader appears to be a 35 to 45 year old, married man (51 percent vs 49) who is a civilian employee who has worked in Grafenwoehr for more than a year, and who has at least some college credits or a degree.

ing it at least monthly. Eighty-four percent said that the paper was a vital source of local community news to them. Army news and policy, youth and child issues, local sports and school events, MWR recreational activities, as well as

local events and happenings all received a rating of satisfactory or better in at least 88 percent of the responses. Only Soldier news and crime on post/in the area received slightly lower scores, 70 percent and 73.5 percent, respectively, of responses were satisfactory or better.

Overall, 90 percent rated the *Training Times* as a satisfactory or better source of information for the topics they think are important, and over 50 percent rated us as very good or excellent in that area. Seventy-six percent of the readers are satisfied with the way that the *Training Times* keeps them informed.

A little over a third of our readers read the paper on-line and a whopping 87 percent don't do the crossword puzzle (not counting the 19 people who skipped this question). Therefore, we will continue to publish our online version (at www.mil-com.de), and have discontinued the crossword puzzle.

Lastly, suggestions for improving our coverage included information on local German hockey and soccer schedules, local German events such as antique and flea markets, fests, concert listings, volksmarches, and what is going on in the local German communities from Nuernberg to Weiden. Also CATC course listings and DoDDS High School sports events with names, school standings and the game schedules.



Photo by Alice Adler

Hohenfels' community tree basks in the glow of hundreds of lights after being lit earlier this month. See page 8 for more holiday photos.

More than half the respondents read every issue of the paper, with another 30 percent read-

Family Readiness is USAREUR top priority

by Gary L. Kieffer

USAREUR Public Affairs

For many people, family readiness is represented by scenes in movies such as "We Were Soldiers Once," where a group of officers' wives banned together to deliver casualty telegrams when there was no official network in place. Today's Family Readiness Groups are a world apart from such scenarios.

With the number of troops deployed from U.S. Army, Europe, family readiness has become a top priority for the command, so much that the Family Readiness Groups have grown from being volunteer-staffed private organizations to Army-funded entities with full-time, paid staffing.

This growth was the main theme of the Family Readiness Group and Family Support Assistants Conference Dec. 5 to 7 in Bad Kissingen, Germany.

USAREUR leads the way for the Army in family readiness, according to Delores Johnson, director of the Army-level Community and Family Support Center, Family Program Directorate.

"USAREUR has been a leader in providing support to the FRGs," Johnson said. "This includes organizational support, especially with rear detachment commanders, the family readiness liaisons and the virtual FRGs."

Family Readiness Groups provide assistance and advice to families left behind during a deployment.

"The FRGs are a viable part of the unit structure that connects the rear detachment commander, with the (deployed) Soldiers' families who are in that unit," Johnson said. "It is the Army's embodiment of how we care for each other."

The FRGs are a unit commander's program. They draw annual support through appropriated funds, including payroll funding for family

readiness support assistants.

They have become a vital part of the Army structure and have helped moved Army families to the forefront, Johnson said.

"The FRGs are not only important in USAREUR, but also Armywide. The Army has made the Family Readiness Groups an official organization," said Col. Denise Berry, chief of Soldier and Family Readiness for USAREUR. "In doing that, we are recognizing the importance of the family to the Army. USAREUR has been on the cutting edge of this. The family is an important element of the Soldier's performance."

USAREUR has also formalized the position of rear detachment commanders, who form part of the family support team along with the FRGs and FRASs.

One of these USAREUR commanders is Lt. Col. Carson Mayo, 1st Armored Division Rear Detachment commander, Wiesbaden, Germany.

"This just shows the shift in where the Army is going," he said. "We also now have FRASs as a paid position. This is the first time that this has ever happened."

"We are supporting the front lines by supporting and facilitating the home front," Mayo said. "The Army is putting their money where their mouth is with family support and family readiness."

Taking care of families has become mission essential, according to USAREUR officials.

"By taking care of the family, we are also taking care of the Soldier and the mission. Ultimately, we just have a better functioning unit," Berry said.

The conference also covered stress relief; operational relationships among family readiness team components; coordinating deployment support; networking and funding procedures.



Photo by Kathy Jordan

Kathy Walker and Rich Little sign autographs at the Vilseck Post Exchange shortly after his Dec. 9 performance at the post theater. See story on page 4.

Q&A

What is your New Year's Resolution?

**Staff Sgt. Andy L. Hardy**

To finish my degree in physical education and complete drill sergeant school.

Candice White

To practice more patience. Because when I'm under pressure, I start to tense up, and I'm working on that.

**Maria Hasley**

To own my own house in Germany.

Prof. Mark Fisch

I guess my resolution is to live a healthier lifestyle and perhaps get married. I'm flying to Canada over the break to find out how real that is.

**Michael D. Watts**

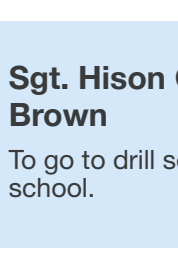
I'm going to aspire to do my job [as a test examiner] for the education center better this year than last year.

Roswitha Hedden

To have more patience with everything. My family, friends, and especially my dog.

**Kathy Henderson**

To quit worrying so much about my grown children; one who's in Iraq, and the other who's in the States.

**Sgt. Hison C. Brown**

To go to drill sergeant school.



Interviews and photos by Shannon Hill
Training Times

Commentary

'Thoughts while moving around'

Personal Responsibility, Professional Standards, and the ACU

by Col. Brian Boyle

USAG Grafenwoehr Commander

Thanks to all who devoted so much time and energy to the successful JMTC/USAG Grafenwoehr Christmas Ball – particularly Debbie Clark and Pearl Clark. I think I speak for all of us that it was a great event and worth all the effort required to conduct it. For those of you who ran in the Jingle Bell run – the 'gray mullet' made its appearance again, and now is a little bit damp. Off to this week's highlights.

Personal Responsibility. Since June 2005, the garrison has executed monthly Sexual Assault Review Boards. Chaired by me, the purpose of the board is to review the resources the garrison has in place to assist victims of sexual assaults. Constant after-action reviews further refine both the speed and quality of the services we offer, and I believe we are ready to assist in these difficult situations. We have found that alcohol continues to show up as a contributing factor in these assault cases. In all but one of our cases, the victim was well beyond 'legally drunk' status and had difficulty remembering what actually happened. More than 50 percent of the alleged perpetrators were inebriated and could not remember what occurred. In short, abuse of alcohol, both here and Army-wide, contributes greatly to these sexual assaults. I absolutely believe in the 'battle buddy' system, and every Soldier should go out with peers to ensure they can handle any situation. But, there comes a time for **personal responsibility**. If you are going to partake of the benefits of living in

Europe, to include alcohol consumption – you are ultimately responsible for your actions. Battle Buddies are fine, but in the end it is your safety – so think long and hard before you decide to 'tie one on' and lose the ability to remember what happened.

**Col. Boyle**

Professional Standards. There is a saying that if you pass by something that is being done wrong, you have just established another standard. Unfortunately, I have seen that happen recently on several occasions and that causes me to mention it this week. Whether it is trash being dumped on the roads or missing the dumpster, children on skateboards without proper protective gear or speeding in the housing areas – if you walk past it, it is now a new standard. I am in the process of updating Joe Moore's policy letters and expect them to be ready for the New Year. When that happens, we will pull out the highlights of the policies and put them in the paper. But, I need some help. If you see something that is wrong – correct it. We should not need a policy letter to determine that 60 KPH through housing areas is dangerous, or that trash on the road shouldn't be left there. Safely slow down the driver or pick up the trash, and together we can

make this a better community. Don't walk by.

Army Combat Uniform (ACUs). For those of you who receive *The Army Times*, you will note a large article on the new ACU. Issued to units deploying to OIF/ OEF and to basic training Soldiers since October, they will appear for purchase in clothing sales stores in January 2006. I would caution all Soldiers; there are already duplicates or fakes in the marketplace that do not meet the Army standard. Purchasing them is just a waste of money. I would also highly encourage reading the *Army Times* article because it explains when the wear-out date of the BDU/DCU is (date when you must have ACUs), and how the Army plans for Soldiers to purchase the new uniforms. I have spoken with Matt Mennona, the AAFES General Manager, and he plans on selling the ACUs in January. It stands to reason that deploying units have first priority, and we will not have every uniform in every size on Jan. 1. However, he will put out what he has, and over time we will get the right sizes for all of our Soldiers.

This is the last *Training Times* for the year. Once the paper begins again, it will have an entirely new name, the *Bavarian News*. I think all of the community has earned the 1/2-day schedule, so enjoy yourselves with family and friends. My staff has geared up to welcome the 11th Trans Company home. We are all proud of their service and look forward to welcoming them back. We wish them and the entire community a safe, festive season and look forward to seeing you in 2006.

Reflect upon our service to our Soldiers

by Russell Hall

IMA-Europe Director

A world of things begin to change when a young man or woman raises their right hand, takes the oath of service, and becomes a member of the U.S. military. Many of those changes are especially noticeable during the holidays.

Soldiers, family members and veterans have a unique set of feelings and assumptions about the holiday season. We cherish the memories of holidays with our families, because we've spent so many without them. We know that while families "back home" gather for the warmth and comfort of their holiday feast, others stand watch at the lonely bor-

**Russell Hall**

ders that divide peace from terrorism.

Like birthdays, graduations, or even the births of their children, missed holidays are part of the many sacrifices made by Soldiers and their families. That's why this month we are especially mindful of our need to provide all the support possible for those who serve.

Our family members are also in our prayers this month. Wartime President Franklin D. Roosevelt said it best: "They also serve who wait and watch." The President understood that the separation and sacrifices of the families were every bit as painful as those experienced on the front lines.

At the Installation Management Agency-Europe, our job is to support Soldiers and their families through good times and bad; wartime and peace; workdays and holidays. Although we need to judge the value of our efforts on a daily basis, December is a special time to reflect upon our service to our Soldiers and to our nation.

As we complete 2005 and look ahead to next year, we need to celebrate our successes, evaluate what worked and what didn't, and move into

the New Year ready to combine experience with new ideas to ensure that IMA-EURO meets – and exceeds – our vital mission of service.

I thank you for your support this year to our Soldiers and families. Many of us are so busy moving from one project to the next that we forget to tally up our victories. I hope you'll spend part of the holidays not only counting your blessings, but also giving yourself the credit you deserve for making life better for the thousands of people we support.

I also encourage you to exercise extra caution as we move through the winter in Europe. Roads are icy, cars need to be winterized and equipped with the proper tires, and those hosting holiday parties must ensure the safety of guests driving home.

In case you're wondering, my favorite gift this year is exactly the same as last year's. In 2005, I received the honor and privilege of working with the finest people in the Army's best organization.

Best Wishes and Happy Holidays.

Remain vigilant and accident-free

USAREUR Public Affairs

Excerpts from Gen. B. B. Bell's Dec. 5
Holiday Season Safety message:

The upcoming holidays are a traditional time for gathering with family and friends to celebrate and share the joy of the season. For those of you who are not deployed, I ask that you use this time to enjoy some well-deserved rest and relaxation. Please keep in mind the families of deployed Soldiers, and those who will be alone over the holidays.

As you relax this holiday season, do not let down your guard; always remain vigilant in terms of safety. USAREUR was just recognized by the Army as the leading MACOM in accident prevention and reduction because of you. While we have had far too many accidental tragedies, because of your efforts, there are very likely Soldiers, civilians, and family members alive and well who, at least statistically, might have otherwise lost their lives or been seriously injured. Thank you.

This time of year can be deadly, and the month of December is particularly dangerous. Approach the season as you would any mission: plan ahead, conduct composite risk management, and execute to standard. Leaders and su-

perisors, engage your Soldiers with Under the Oak Tree counseling to help them identify and mitigate the hazards associated with this time of year. Instill in them the importance of individual responsibility, and let them know that the choices they make affect not only themselves, but their family, friends, and coworkers.

I have challenged everyone to take an active role in promoting safety and reducing hazards. Despite our efforts and the awards we have received, we have recently had a dramatic increase in the number of Soldiers lost to needless and tragic accidents. We must increase our efforts to prevent further losses. As I noted above, involvement of first-line supervisors and Under the Oak Tree counseling are key to accident prevention. In addition, I ask leaders to "think outside the box" and use innovative approaches to challenge the mindset of our Soldiers.

Winter weather in Europe is extremely hazardous. Fewer hours of daylight, black ice, fog, and snow, combined with roads crowded with holiday travelers, create dangerous driving conditions. Preparation is one of the keys to reducing these hazards. AAFES-Eur is offering free winter safety inspections of U.S. Forces-plated vehicles. Take advantage of this opportunity to ensure that your vehicle is ready for the chal-

lenges of winter driving. In addition, remember to check road conditions before departing on trips, and always drive defensively.

This time of year also increases the risk of household fires. Unattended cooking, candles, Christmas trees, holiday lights, and flammable decorations all are potential causes of fire. The effect of these fires is measured not only by the renovation costs and the inconvenience to the occupants, but the inherent loss of household goods. Do not allow your holiday celebration to turn into a tragedy. Have a fire plan in place and rehearse it with your entire family. Know where the fire extinguishers are located and how to use them. Never leave cooking or candles unattended and never overload electrical outlets.

I salute all members of the Army in Europe family for the fine work they perform every day. Thank you for your continued sacrifices and dedicated service to our Nation, in war and in garrison. With your continued commitment and sincere concern for the welfare of one another, we can all enjoy a safe and festive holiday season.

Let's all make a personal commitment to No Loss of Life. By taking care of one another, we can all continue to execute with excellence Any Mission, Anywhere.

TRAINING TIMES

Grafenwoehr • Hohenfels • Vilseck

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DeCA Alert: LunchMakers Recalled

Kay Blakley
DeCA Europe Consumer Advocate

Seven varieties of Armour LunchMakers have been recalled because of possible contamination with *Listeria monocytogens*.

Five of the seven affected products are carried by European commissaries, but only two of those products (Armour LunchMakers Turkey Fun Kit Cracker Crunchers/UPC ending with 02261, and Armour LunchMakers Cooked Ham Cracker Crunchers /UPC ending with 03427) are believed to have reached commissary shelves.

Patrons who have purchased either of these products, bearing one of the sell-by dates listed below, should not consume them, but return them to the commissary where purchased for a full refund.

The remaining products included in this recall are either still in transit to the European theater or are believed to have been intercepted at DeCA’s central cold storage facility.

Identifying information for all affected products is as follows:

ARMOUR LunchMakers Turkey Fun Kit, CRACKER CRUNCHERS, UPC 4660002261. Each package bears the establishment number P-9 inside the USDA seal of inspection, and one of the following 2006 sell-by dates: Jan. 07, Jan. 12, Jan. 16, Jan. 21, Jan. 22, Jan. 23, Jan. 27, Jan. 28, Feb. 04, Feb10, Feb16, or Feb17.

ARMOUR LunchMakers Cooked Ham, CRACKER CRUNCHERS, UPC 4660-003427. Each package bears the establishment

number Est.1059 inside the USDA seal of inspection, and one of the following 2006 sell-by dates: Jan. 01, Jan. 06, Jan. 08, Jan. 12, Jan. 19, Jan. 20, Jan. 21, Jan. 22, Jan. 23, Jan. 26, Jan. 27, Jan. 30, Feb. 02, Feb. 03, Feb. 04, Feb. 05, Feb. 06, Feb. 07, Feb. 08, Feb. 09, Feb. 10, Feb. 11, or Feb. 20.

ARMOUR LunchMakers Turkey, CRA-CKER CRUNCHERS, UPC 4660003428. The package also contains a Nestle Butterfinger Bar. Each package bears the establishment number P-9 inside the USDA seal of inspection, and one of the following 2006 sell-by dates: Jan. 01, Jan. 07, Jan. 09, Jan. 13, Jan. 21, Jan. 22, Jan. 26, Feb. 02, Feb. 03, Feb. 04, Feb. 05, Feb. 06, Feb. 08, Feb. 09, Feb. 10, Feb. 16, Feb. 17, Feb. 18, Feb. 19, or Feb. 20.

ARMOUR LunchMakers Ham Fun Kit, Cooked Ham, CRACKER CRUNCHERS, UPC 4660002262. Each package bears the establishment number Est. 1059 inside the USDA seal of inspection, and one of the following 2006 sell-by dates: Jan. 12, Jan. 13, Jan. 16, Jan. 19, Jan. 23, Jan. 27, Jan. 28, Feb. 10, Feb. 11, Feb. 18, or Feb. 19.

ARMOUR LunchMakers Chicken, CRA-CKER CRUNCHERS, UPC 4660003383. Each package bears the establishment number P-9 inside the USDA seal of inspection, and one of the following 2006 sell-by dates: Jan. 01, Jan. 02, Jan. 09, Jan. 16, Jan. 23, Jan. 30, Feb. 06, Feb. 07, Feb16, Feb. 17, Feb. 18, Feb. 19, Feb. 20, or Feb. 21.

In Briefs

Holiday Services & Mass (Graf & Vilseck)

24 December (Saturday)
Catholic Christmas Eve Mass 5 p.m. (Vilseck)
Protestant Christmas Eve Service 5 p.m. (Grafenwoehr)
Episcopal Christmas Eve Candlelight Service 7 p.m. (Vilseck)
Catholic Christmas Eve Mass 7:30 p.m. (Grafenwoehr)
25 December (Sunday)
Protestant Christmas Day Service 10:30 a.m. (Grafenwoehr)
General Protestant Service 10 a.m. (Vilseck)

Graf Community Center hours

The main doors of bldg. 244, the Community Center, will be open from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday thru Friday. The following agencies are now in Bldg 244: CPAC/NAF, Driver’s Testing, SATO, Reenlistment, Housing, 38th PSB, ID Cards, IACS, ACS and CYS Registration (coming very soon), RCO, HRD, USAG S-1, 106th Finance, USAG Graf Director of Plans, Training, Mobilization, and Security / Personnel Security. For hours and phone numbers of the individual agencies, refer to the USAG Graf website phonebook (<http://www.100asg.army.mil/info/GrafQuickRef.pdf>).

Women’s self-defense class

Class is every 2nd Saturday of the month, bldg. 221, 1-4 p.m. Costs: \$36. Adults only. For more Info call DSN 476-2214/2998 or CIV 09641-929769

Vilseck storytime

Come to the Vilseck library for Pre-school storytime every Wednesday morning at 10 a.m. Stories and crafts for pre-schoolers. POC is Karen Beck at DSN 476-1740.

Meter readings

Through January 2006: The electricity supplier EnBW (Energie Baden Wuerttemberg) will perform annual meter readings in the Graf and Vilseck GHRP (Government Housing Rental Program) and leased-housing areas. The personnel will have identification cards which will show that they are from the electricity supplier EnBW. Please provide them access to your electricity meter. For information call Barbara Bösl at 476-2207.

Bank hour changes

6 January: The Grafenwoehr Community Bank will be closed for Three Kings Day.
11 January: The Grafenwoehr Community Bank will change operating hours due to Staff Training and will be open from 11 a.m. – 4 p.m. POC for both actions is Mrs. E. Jones, 475-6140.

Trouble readjusting?

Are you having difficulties readjusting after your deployment? Are you drinking too much, having arguments with your family and friends?
“Seeking Safety – Repairing the Armor,” is a series of classes about learning coping skills. Come to an information session at the FRG building (273) Dec. 14, 5:30 to 7 p.m. POC: Amy Parke, Social Work Services, 476-2100, 09662-83-2100.

Hohenfels commissary is top-notch

by Alice Adler
Training Times

The residents of Hohenfels have long known that their commissary is top-notch, but two recent DeCA Europe awards that the Hohenfels commissary has won are now proof of that fact.

The first award the commissary has earned is the In-Tolerance award. This accountability award is based on the inventory accountability

of the store. Other factors are also considered, such as employee relations, customer service, safety and security, and IG compliance.

In order to earn this award all departments of commissary inventory have to be within very strict DeCA guidelines. “They have to be pretty close to perfect,” noted Gerri Young, the DeCA Europe Public Affairs Officer.

The second award won by the commissary, the Director’s Annual Golden Performance

Award for a Large Store, is an even bigger achievement. The small store award was won by the commissary in Livorno, Italy. This award reviews commissary operations overall. “From the front door to the back door,” said Store Director Jim Holzhauser. In addition to the same inventory results considered for the In-Tolerance Award, the Golden Performance Award considered factors such as customer coupon usage, front-end cash balancing, accurate shelf pricing and scanning, customer service survey results, community outreach and store appearance.

“They did well across the board,” said Young, “higher than any other store in Europe.” There are currently 52 DeCA commissaries operating in Europe. Residents of Hohenfels might be surprised to learn their commissary is considered a large store. The classification is based on the amount of business a store does, and there again Hohenfels stands out. The store has average sales of over \$500,000 a month, for a total last year of \$6.2 million. “That’s a lot of pork and beans!” said Holzhauser. The store carries 8,400 different kinds of products and rings up an average of over 14,000 transactions every month. All of this is done by less than 40 employees who work the commissary seven days a week, three shifts a day. “It’s not easy,” Holzhauser noted, “it never stops.”

Many of the commissary employees will be given cash awards for these two impressive achievements. “I hear nothing but good things about Jim Holzhauser and how he runs his store,” said Young. Holzhauser in turn credits his employees with having what it takes to win these prestigious awards, naming the store’s excellent customer service as an area in which its employees really stand out.

“It’s a very big deal,” said Young, “It’s public proof that they do a really nice job.”



Photo by Alice Adler

Kymra Dorre shops for produce in the award-winning Hohenfels commissary. Store appearance is important in winning the awards.

Claim forms vital to Tricare program

by Kathy Jordan
Training Times

When active duty Soldiers, family members or civilians receive medical care on the economy, they often forget to bring their claim forms back to the Tricare office in the clinic. Failure to return these forms can often lead to bills not being forwarded to the appropriate location.

“We always have to have claim forms brought back to the clinic so we can find out if addresses are updated or if they are under the right Tricare plan,” said Beatrix Womack, Tricare representative. “When we receive the form we can let people know if they have a deductible or if they need to change something in their file,” she said.

When faced with any type of trauma, it is often easy to forget the importance of returning these forms to Tricare representatives.

“If there is an emergency over the weekend.. the hospital gives patients a claim form to fill out. These forms should be signed at the hospital as well as the clinic. Sometimes the patient is not able to sign or fill out the paperwork due to their condition and sometimes they just forget,” said Womack.

After an emergency has occurred, the Tricare representative should be contacted within 48 hours so paperwork can begin and billing forms can be prepared.

“If a patient doesn’t come to the clinic we can not enter their paperwork into the computer. If the bill comes to us we can not credit the bill unless we have a claim form from the patient. We have to try to locate the patient by using addresses in the system and this causes problems getting the bills out on time,” said Womack.

When patients forget to fill out these forms, it may cause financial problems later.

“We receive a lot of bills and we do not have the claim form. Sometimes we have problems getting them paid because people go to the hos-

pital and think that because they signed the claim everything is fine. They PCS or ETS to the states and the bill comes a couple of months later. If we don’t have a claim number there’s no way we can get the bill paid. We try to track the patient down and if we can not find them the bill goes to the collections department,” said Womack.

“We are always ready to help out and answer your questions. The earlier people come to see us the better,” said Womack.

For more information call Beatrix Womack at 09662-83-3323 or visit the Vilseck clinic. The Tricare enrollment center is located in bldg. 700 on Rose Barracks.



Photo by Shannon Hill

Gerhard Bessner, Camp Normandy DFAC manager, watches Karl Rohrer prepare lasagna for dinner. The facility recently underwent the Phillip A. Connelly Inspection, in which the top seven military dining facilities worldwide are examined for quality, taste, and cleanliness, among other things. The winners will be announced at the end of December.

Victory's Guardians deploy to Iraq

by Shannon Hill
Training Times

Ample training and a “go get ‘em” attitude characterizes the Delta Company, 3rd Battalion, 58th Aviation Regiment, Victory's Guardians, as they deploy to Iraq.

“I'm really proud of all my Soldiers. With all the extensive training they have met the challenge...[I] couldn't go with a better group of Soldiers,” said 1st Sgt. Kevin Jordan.

For about four months, the Soldiers have undergone a variety of training, covering new Air Traffic Service systems, combat

forces, and directing air traffic.

“It's not as easy as it sounds, but we just keep going,” said Capt. Sean W. Barrett.

In addressing the Soldiers, Lt. Col. Keith Ladd assured them that their trainers “spoke with one voice: ‘Delta Company is a squared-away unit; they are professional, competent, and learn quickly.’ ...[they] were impressed by your tactical and technical expertise.”

The Family Readiness Group, led by Kathy Jordan, provided care packages for the Soldiers to take with them. These contained

envelopes, tissues, flags, phone cards, tic-tacs, writing pads, pens, hand sanitizers, and gum.

In an optimistic voice, Sgt. 1st Class Victor Rivera's wife, Evelyn, said “a year will go by quickly.”

The strong family bonds and extensive training will hold the unit together as they spend the next year down range. The ceremony was wrapped up with a warm round of applause for the Soldiers, and the words of Ladd echoing in their ears, that “the lessons you learned in the rolling hills of Bavaria will ensure your success in the deserts of Iraq.”

Little wows Hohenfels in a big way

by Alice Adler
Training Times

Hohenfels was treated to a special show Dec. 10 when comedian Rich Little and his troupe performed their show at the Post Theater.

An enthusiastic crowd was wowed by the master of impersonations.

Little did a number of his famous presidential impersonations – from Nixon to the current President. His partner, Kathy Walker, did some impersonations as well, including Dolly Parton,

Cher and Barbara Streisand. The two comedians paired up for some famous duets, such as George Burns and Gracie Allen. A band rounded out the show, and the hour-and-a-half show went by quickly.

Earlier that day, Little, his wife, crew and band were given a tour of the facilities on Hohenfels. A briefing giving examples of the training conducted at JMRC and life in the Garrison impressed Little, who asked numerous questions about how training was conducted.

The briefing was followed by a tour of Building 100, known to Hohenfels residents as the “Star Wars” building, where the intricate computer video and audio technology interested and impressed Little's road crew.

Lunch at the 1-4 Infantry Dining Facility showed Little what the best DFAC in the U.S. Army had to offer. “That was really great food,” he commented.

Following lunch, Little took the opportunity to pay a surprise visit to a room full of Soldiers.

The Soldiers were part of the Florida National Guard training in Hohenfels for their upcoming rotation in Kosovo. Little surprised them by walking in during a routine briefing and proceeded to treat them to a sneak peek of his show, chatting with the Soldiers and doing a bit of a John Wayne impersonation.

Leaving the Soldiers, Little was glowing, “That,” he said happily, “was the best part of the whole trip for me.”

Kids bored? Then try a ‘book basket’

by Alice Adler
Training Times

Doing errands all over post is no fun for anyone. It is no fun for Mom, who has to constantly load and unload the kids from the car and take them into the various offices on post, and it is no fun for the kids who end up bored, waiting around for what seems like forever.

Well, the folks at the Hohenfels Elementary School have come up with a solution to that problem.

At various places around post where people typically wait for extended periods of time, HES has placed baskets full of books. These plastic baskets with assorted reading material can be found in places such as the health clinic, the dental clinic, the barber shop, the banks and the housing office.

The books, which have been donated by parents and teachers, cover all different levels of reading ability and interest. Signs on the baskets encourage kids to read for pleasure. So instead of pestering their parents or playing with a Game Boy, perhaps “next time they're waiting they'll hopefully pick up a book and start reading,” said Jennifer Shell, a 4th and 5th grade teacher at HES who is the chair-

person of the School-Home Partnership Committee.

The School-Home Partnership Committee originally came up with the idea for the baskets. The mission of the committee is to create bonds between the school, the parents and the community. They work to get both the parents and the community involved in the school and to keep the community informed of what is going on every day in the school buildings.

The Committee hopes that the book baskets will help promote reading, and in turn help the Elementary School achieve its goal of increasing reading in the student population. Shell notes that research shows that as little as 20 minutes a day of reading out loud to your children, or having them read on their own, boosts higher level thinking skills.

So far the baskets seem to be working. Facilities with baskets have reported the children are eager to look at the books.

At the barber shop, the staff says that the kids get so excited about the books that they often want to take them home.

The staff also admitted that they also enjoy the books during their down-time at work.



Abbey Crane is a little too young to read, but that doesn't stop her and her mother, Angie, from enjoying the book basket at the Hohenfels Community Bank.

Photo by Alice Adler

Military retirees in Germany have some privileges

Office of the Provost Marshal
U.S. Army Europe and 7th Army

Mannheim, Germany – Retired members of the U.S. military and, in some cases, their dependants can get authorization to shop in post exchanges and commissaries in Germany. However, the arrangements do not apply in other countries or to retired civilian employees.

Shopping

According to Rita Cooper, chief of customs investigations for the USAREUR Provost Marshal, retirees and their dependents can shop in exchanges and commissaries in Germany if they first obtain a U.S. Forces Verification of Status of U.S. Forces Retired Personnel /Unaccompanied Dependents (AE Form 550-175K) from a

military customs office. For this, Cooper said, retirees must either be living in or visiting Germany for 30 days or longer and will need their passport and retiree ID card. Widows and widowers of deceased military members must be residents of Germany. Cooper said retirees or their surviving spouses should take the verification form to the German customs office serving their area of residence; they will then receive a German customs certificate, or “pink card,” which is initially valid for two months.

“The pink card with your retiree ID card allows you access to post exchanges and commissaries in Germany, where you may buy non-rationed items,” she said.

Pink card holders are required to return to the

German customs office no later than the fifth day of every month and present all cash register sales receipts for the previous month, Cooper said. The receipts are totaled and a fixed import tax (currently 13.5 percent, but subject to change) is added to the total for payment. After this the pink card can be extended for another month.

“To ensure your pink card remains valid, it is important to report to German customs even if you do not make any purchases,” Cooper said. “This system works well, but deliberate abuse could endanger a privilege enjoyed by many hundreds of retired personnel and their dependents.”

Using the APO in Germany

The Military Postal System provides limited

postal service to retirees or their surviving spouses living in Germany. Retired service members and surviving spouses can apply to use the MPS at the Army Post Office. Under this agreement, retirees receive mail through “Box R” (general delivery) at the local APO and must take any parcels received unopened to German customs for clearance.

Failure to present parcels to German customs within a reasonable time (about one week) may result in a loss of APO privileges.

Call any military customs office or the Customs Hot Line (DSN 381-7610 / CIV 0621-7307610) to find out more or consult the Internet at hqusareur.army.mil/opm/custom4.htm.

Easing military student transitioning

Two-day seminar seeks to promote student stability

by Shannon Hill
Training Times

The life of a military child as a student isn't always easy. Students often face frequent moves or separation from family members.

The average military student will move between six and nine times during the course of education from kindergarten to their senior year.

In an effort to help ease the transition, 52 principals, school liaison officers, and counselors from the Bavarian school district gathered at the Grafenwoehr Tower Restaurant for the first of three phases in a two-day seminar called the Transition Counselor Institute, sponsored by the Military Child Education Coalition.

“The challenge and duty for us as teachers, counselors, administrators, school liaison officers, and community members is to promote predictability and stability for transitioning students and families,” said Steve Vojtecky, Grafenwoehr's School Liaison Officer.

TCI serves as part of the overall Army's strategic plan to help ease a student's transition. Its objective is to give students access to those who understand the needs of the mobile military student and who also have the skills to bridge the transition from school to school. Those who attend will be well-versed in strategies and resources designed to appropriately address issues faced by military children and their families.

“Every school has their own special touch to

help make students feel welcome. This training helps provide a baseline for them to follow,” said Susan Martz-Cothran, the Hohenfels Elementary School principal.

As the Graf community prepares for the incoming Stryker Brigade, Mary Zimmerman-Bayer, the principal of Grafenwoehr Elementary School, had this to say of the training: “It's very timely for us. It gives us a lot of structure as we try to accommodate and build a new community.”

Of those who attended, many agreed that one of the most important aspects was the availability of resources. This underlies one of TCI's main goals; to provide an environment [to those

who attended]...to have access to professional networks, technologies, resources, and support systems in order to help them stay abreast of the “dynamic and diverse” 9 – 12 experiences.

“When they [the attendees] leave, they'll have some ideas to implement immediately to help students transitioning, [which includes] those who are leaving, and those who are coming in,” said Dr. Mary Keller, the Executive Director of TCI.

So despite the frequent moves and deployments of parents, people can find comfort in the knowledge that their school officers care, and are willing to take the time and proper measures to help.

Vilseck VFW brings joy to Czech orphans

Photos and article by Nick D'Amario
USAG Grafenwoehr Public Affairs

Joy, in the form of presents donated by the Vilseck and Grafenwoehr communities, was brought to nearly 150 orphans in the city of Most, in the Czech Republic.

The orphans, ranging from newborn babies to teenagers, were visited in two children's homes Dec. 10 and 11 by VFW members Hal Hedges, Jake Johnson, James Dicks, Frank Marsh and Thadius Jones.

"We, as a community, came together and carried smiles to the faces of a lot of kids who will go this Christmas and many more without parents," said Johnson, commander of Vilseck's VFW Post 9334.

The VFW has been sponsoring the annual event since Hedges' 1991 initial visit with Pavel Weiss, then-county commissioner,

and now Most city's vice mayor. Weiss still coordinates the annual event with Hedges, and was present at the Dec. 11 event.

Hedges recalls his first visit to Most orphans, numbering around 40 in 1991: "The children were a real scraggly bunch whose living conditions, by our standards, were horrible."

Dicks was instrumental in getting the Graf community's support in lieu of the decrease in the number of troops in the Vilseck community.

The program centers around a Christmas tree at the Vilseck commissary, where community members select age and gender-specific cards for orphans upon which to base their holiday gift.

Gifts from community members included stuffed animals, dolls, clothing, games and bicycles.

"I wish the community folks could have seen the happiness on

the children's faces when Santa Claus entered the room where they were waiting," said Johnson. "The VFW motto 'We honor our dead through the living' was fulfilled to its fullest with the help of our great community," he said.

The VFW will again visit the Czech Republic in May 2006, traveling to the town of Lom, where there will be a memorial ceremony for Lt. John H. Banks III, a P-47 Thunderbolt pilot shot down April 17, 1945.

Banks' Thunderbolt was among 75 U.S. aircraft shot down over the Czech Republic in a 24-hour period during an allied attack.

The May ceremony will be held in conjunction with Lom's official Czech-American Friendship Day celebrations.

Visit the Vilseck VFW website at www.vfw9334.com



Left: Santa rewarded two boys with bicycles during the Dec. 10-11 holiday events in Most. Middle: Looks of anticipation are evident as children wait to hear their names called to go get their present from Santa. Right: No time was wasted in playing with toys once they were unwrapped.

GES students' holiday gift to elderly

Photo and article by Shannon Hill
Training Times

With cheerful enthusiasm and a resounding chorus of 'We Wish You a Merry Christmas,' Grafenwoehr Elementary School students entered the Gmund Altenheim, a nursing home about 10 minutes from the Graf post. For the fourth year in a row, the students were asked to return and help spread the holiday spirit.

Many of the students wore Santa hats, and all had jingle bells to accompany them. A few of the bilingual students also recited Christmas poems in Spanish, Italian and German.

While the students were singing, a few parent volunteers set up the pie table in the back. Parents contributed 25 apple and pumpkin pies, which the students distributed among the eager residents. The students also handed out homemade Christmas cards containing German, American, and personalized holiday

greetings.

The hour at the home was rounded off with a rendition of 'Oh Tannenbaum,' to which many of the residents sang along. "It brought tears to my eyes," said Barb Davis, school counselor, "...because a lot [of the residents] might not have families around, or are too sick to be on their own."

Nancy Smith, a fifth grader, felt really good about the reception the students received. "I think they really like it because they were all singing and clapping along," said Smith.

Kiana Vertz, another 5th grader, summed up the experience with "it made me feel really nice inside."

As the students arrived back at their school by bus, Mary Zimmerman-Bayer, the principal, thanked the students, saying that they "touched the lives of many people who'll remember you forever."



A day in the life: Librarian

by Shannon Hill
Training Times

If you're looking for tweedle beetle battles on a noodle-eating Poodle, be sure to ask your librarian. They just might be able to tell you that they could be found in *Fox in Socks* by Dr. Suess.

Of course, with questions like these, it is quite understandable that a librarian's life can often be complicated.

But Conny Cameror, Grafenwoehr's supervisory librarian, is very enthusiastic about what her job entails: "What matters is that they [the patrons] have all their needs under one umbrella, and if we don't have it, we can get it...we want people to come, feel comfortable, and meet with other people from similar backgrounds."

Typical day-to-day duties of a librarian include a number of activities directly involving the clientele and the books.

"We do acquisitions, contracts to buy books, and set up catalogue records for books. On a yearly basis, we inventory the newspapers and magazines to see how current they are," said Cameror.

On an average day, the librarians also check the "in" boxes, clean up the library, straighten up the books, magazines and

newspapers on the shelves. Every Wednesday, the librarians at the Graf and Vilseck libraries sponsor a "story hour" for little kids. They also meet-and-greet the people who are coming in, sure to offer them any help that they might need.

Students often are in need of such help. Often, a Soldier comes in need of assistance for research projects. The librarians help them to navigate term paper assistance programs, on which the army spends thousands of dollars. These programs aid students in knowing how to research, what to research, when they can do it, and when they are on leave, how they can access information via their AKO accounts. "You have to bring a higher level of expertise to the table when you're doing research for a military Soldier," said Cameror. The goal of this assistance is to make the Soldiers more self-sufficient.

Cameror collaborates the brainstorming effort of various contributing members, and is in charge of introducing new and original programs to the library agenda that benefit the community as a whole.

Examples of such programs include their new Polish and Italian cultural mornings. What really made them unique were the contributions of a few of the natives from those countries. "We have a lot of multi-nationals who work and come through here. I like that international flair and environment," said Cameror.

"Partnering with other organizations makes our programming successful," said Kathy Henderson, assistant librarian.

A recent program that was run in conjunction with ITR was a study of George S. Patton, in conjunction with Veteran's Day. Those who participated were bused over to the Patton Museum in the Czech Republic, and had many lively discussions. This resulted in the formation of a brand-new military history club which now meets on a monthly basis.

Other library offerings include an online book club, study rooms for those who are easily distracted by noise, and a new Patient Education Center, a separate room where people can come after visiting the health clinic and look up specific information.

"We do everyday things that make a difference for the Soldiers; it's important to say that we're here for the Soldiers, but we're here for the families too," said Henderson.

Be sure to visit the Graf library soon, but in the meantime visit their website at <https://www.ulinet.army.mil/>.



Photo by Shannon Hill
Robert Whitfield enjoys the library's newspapers, magazines, videos, and quiet.

3-day Entrepreneur Workshop is free

USAG Grafenwoehr Public Affairs

If you've ever considered going into business on your own, such as setting up your own shop or service on-base or on the German economy, then the Entrepreneur's Workshop may be right up your alley.



Gabriele Murry

The free 3-day workshop will introduce participants to the development of business concepts, structure of a business/marketing plan, market and competitor analysis, legal requirements and pre-requisites for a business here in Germany, and much more.

If you're a spouse, contractor, military retiree, or a civilian who wants to stay in Europe but may not be extended, then the workshop offers you entrepreneurial food for thought.

The workshop will be conducted at the Gruenderzentrum, a business development agency located just outside of Graf's gate #6, and will occur late January. The workshop requires a minimum of three people to sign up, and input from folks registering for the workshop will determine the actual dates for participation.

The Gruenderzentrum is a business startup agency established in 1996 by the state of Bavaria. Christine Pollath is the business manager, and Gabriele Murry will conduct the workshop.

Murry's qualifications include Masters degrees in Human Relations (M.H.R.) and Business Administration (M.B.A.), and eight years as a branch chief for the U.S. Army. She is an assistant professor with the University of Applied Sciences, Amberg-Weiden.

For more information, contact Gabriele Murry at 09641-929514 or e-mail g.w.murry@t-online.de



Photo by Alice Adler
The Hohenfels Kontakt Club donned Santa hats for their line-dancing performance at the Velburg Christmas Market Dec. 11.



Photo by Paula Guzman
A special effects vantage of the Graf Holiday Tree Lighting.



Photo by Kathy Jordan
William "Kringle" Graham was at the PX in Vilseck Dec. 7; his unit, the 201st FSB, was gift wrapping for donations.



Photo by Alice Adler
Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus handed out candy canes to visitors young and old at the Hohenfels Tree Lighting Ceremony.



Photo by Kathy Jordan
A healthy fire kept lots of folks warm at the Vilseck Holiday Tree Lighting.

USAG Grafenwoehr Holiday Moments



Photo by Alice Adler
5-year-old Michaela Lefebvre gives Santa a shy look at the Hohenfels library. The library partnered with BOSS to offer a day of photos with Santa.



Photo by Shannon Hill
The charming "Candy Canes" of Susan Groeger's Beginning Ballet class captivated the audience as they danced to the Christmas Classic, "Nutcracker Dreams."



Vilseck Elementary School students collected almost 300 boxes in donated Christmas items which were then forwarded to a Polish mission, orphanage, and children's hospital in Lwowek Slaski, Poland.

Photo by Priscilla Coffman-Veto



Photo by Alice Adler
Despite the cold rain, the Hohenfels Elementary School chorus entertained the crowd at the Holiday Tree Lighting ceremony with holiday songs.



Photo by Nick D'Amario
Kathleen Gibbs, Katherine DiCrocco and Catherine Winters thrilled the audience at the Vilseck Holiday Tree Lighting celebration with classic holiday tunes.

Bruges – tiny Belgian city with huge heart

Photos and article by Alice Adler
Training Times

The tiny city of Bruges, Belgium is often one of the over-looked jewels of Europe. Small, friendly, beautiful and charming, Bruges should be a must-see on everyone’s lists.

This incredible town is so beautiful, in fact, that the entire city center has been named a UNESCO World Heritage site.

In the Middle Ages, the trading town of Bruges was one of the wealthiest cities in Europe. It survived the invading and conquering armies of many wars and is now renowned for the beauty and tranquility it offers visitors. The architecture of Bruges still harkens back to days of yore, and the visitor can easily get lost in its network of winding streets lined with beautiful buildings.

There are a few different ways to explore the corners and streets of Bruges.

Like many cities in the low countries, Bruges is filled with canals. The entire city, in fact, is ringed by a large canal. Take one of the many open-topped boat tours through the city to get a good look at the fairy tale gabled buildings.

Another way to check out the city is on a romantic horse-and-carriage ride through the cobblestone streets.

But perhaps the best way to see Bruges is on foot. Get lost in the winding streets and find unexpected treasures and details – these are the best parts of the city.

Bruges’ main market square is the heart of the city. Restaurants, stores, and magnificent buildings crowd their way around the large open square. Climb the 366 steps to the top of the towering belfry for an unparalleled view of the red rooftops. This 13th century structure contains a 47-bell carillon that rings every quarter hour. Other sites in the market

square include the ornate Gothic Town Hall, the Palace of the Liberty of Bruges, and the Basilica of the Holy Blood.



Old-fashioned windmills stand outside the city walls, creating a picturesque scene for visitors.

The tiny city of Bruges boasts no less than six museums. Everything from fine art and furniture to lace and diamonds is on display in one of Bruges’ many museums. Bruges is also a city full of ornate churches. A visitor could easily spend their weekend only visiting the beautiful houses of worship. A visit to the Church of Our Lady holds a special surprise. A Madonna and Child statue by Michelangelo is on display here, the only one of his works to leave Italy during his lifetime.

Take a walk around the city in the park where the city walls once stood. During the 14th century Bruges’ wall had nine different fortified gates. Four still remain and can be easily visited as long as you watch out for the traffic that swirls around them. In addition to the gates, the outer ring boasts four picturesque windmills, some of which are still in use and can be toured.

No vacation is complete without a little shopping, and Bruges has plenty to shop for. World famous Belgian lace is a popular item in Bruges and many stores offer a wide selection. Note that hand-made lace is more expensive, and usually more finely woven, than machine-made lace. Tapestries are also popular souvenirs.

On the culinary side, beer and chocolate are wise choices. Creamy smooth Belgian chocolates make a perfect gift – or a perfect lunch. Tiny Belgium hosts as many as 1,000 different breweries, and many of these beers cannot be purchased outside of the country. Various stores offer a wide variety of Belgian beers, as well as the highly specialized glasses to drink them from.

Whether wandering the winding streets and cruising the placid canals, or shopping in the charming stores and dining in the variety of restaurants, Bruges has something for every visitor.



Brugges’ romantic network of canals lend to this city’s old-world flavor.



A horse-and-carriage ride is the perfect way to see this lovely city.



Belgium is one the the world's largest producers of micro-brewed beers, and many stores offer a wide selection.



Bicycles are a very common mode of everyday transportation in the mostly-flat country of Belgium.

USAG Grafenwoehr shuttle bus schedules change today

USAG Grafenwoehr Public Affairs

Starting today, new mass transit bus schedules at Grafenwoehr and Vilseck are in effect.

Transportation budget and personnel constraints at the local Transportation Motor Pools require reductions of existing bus services to off-post Government-leased housing areas.

Three daily round trips to the major Government-leased housing areas around Grafenwoehr and Vilseck will be available Monday through Friday. Grafenwoehr will also provide three runs on Saturdays. Vilseck will continue to provide two runs on Saturdays.

Bus runs to Wuerzburg Hospital for out-patient treatment and to Camp Normandy Dining Facility are not affected by these reductions.

The USAG Grafenwoehr mass transit services include routes shown in the accompanying box.

The bus schedules are available online at http://www.100asg.army.mil/info/USAGG_schedules_W05.pdf

For more information, contact the USAG Grafenwoehr Transportation Division at DSN 475-7222/6347.

Route#	Route	Operating Hours
G-1	Grafenwoehr – Vilseck and back	0625 hrs – 1832 hrs
G-2	Grafenwoehr – Eschenbach and back	0830 hrs – 1623 hrs
G-3	Grafenwoehr – Pressath – Kastl and back	0815 hrs – 1621 hrs
G-4	Grafenwoehr – Vilseck – Wuerzburg Hospital and back	0600 hrs – 1800 hrs
G-5	Grafenwoehr Main Post – Camp Normandy DFAC	0545 hrs – 1826 hrs
V-1	Vilseck – Auerbach and back	0743 hrs – 1635 hrs
V-2	Vilseck – Sulzbach – Amberg and back	0758 hrs – 1643 hrs
V-3	Vilseck – Auerbach – Amberg and back (Weekends)	0856 hrs – 1634 hrs

German New Year's customs and superstitions

by Martina Bias
Special to the Training Times

At the end of December, we all like to look ahead and speculate what the New Year will bring us. To help forecast future events and fortune, Germans use several oracles, superstitions and customs to assist them.

One popular German custom is Bleigiessen (lead pouring). A candle is lit and small chunks of lead are melted in a spoon held above it. The liquid lead is then quickly poured from the spoon into a bucket or bowl of cold water, where it hardens almost immediately. Each person tries to determine what he or she "sees" in the hardened lead figure, much like interpreting fluffy clouds in the sky.

Often, the lead figure is held up to a candle or other light, and the shape of the shadow it casts aids in this important decision. The shape of the lead will supposedly gives clues about the year to come (for example: an anchor – help in need; flower – new friendship; heart – falling in love; rings and wreath – marriage; stars – good luck).



Silvesterblei (New Year's Eve lead) sets can be purchased in most department stores in Germany. These kits come complete with lead figures, a spoon, and a list of possible shapes and their meanings.

Because of the dangers of lead, pewter is nowadays often substituted in this traditional ritual. If real lead is used, the spoon it is melted in should be disposed of afterwards. An even safer alternative is to use wax.

Another German custom aimed to prepare oneself for the events of a new calendar year is called "Bibelstechen" (bible poking). This is done by sticking your thumb sideways between the pages of a closed bible, opening it and pointing to a scripture with your eyes closed. The selected passage is then interpreted for possible indications about life during the next twelve months.

Should the New Year's oracles not forecast you good things, you might want to stock up on some good luck. Good-luck charms are popular gifts Germans will give at the end of the year to wish each other all the best for the coming year.

A lucky one-cent coin can get you started. It is believed that the origin for something big often lies in something small, and our Roman ancestors were known to sacrifice coins to their gods on New Years.

Lots of good luck is also coming your way if you find a four-leaf clover. (Luckily for you, this symbol can be found in many stores this time of year). A true four-leaf clover is believed to be very rare and therefore a strong indicator of good fortune. The Celtic cross found in this shape is also a symbol of safety. It is interpreted as connecting all four directions on the compass and is believed to bring good fortune, as well as averting hardships. Sewing a four-leaf clover into your clothes before a trip keeps any bad luck at bay and children who carry one in their back pack supposedly do better in school.

Another good-luck charm for Germans is a mushroom called "Fliegenpilz" (fly agaric). The

reason for this is not immediately obvious, as this red mushroom with white dots is neither rare nor precious. As a matter of fact, it is extremely poisonous and brings sure death when consumed. The ancient Germanic people, however, revered it as holy. The real reason behind its popularity, however, could be that it has been known throughout history for its intoxicating effects.

Horseshoes are also considered good luck in Germany. This custom stems from earlier times when horses were highly valued as modes of transportation and for working the fields. Horseshoes were very also very expensive back then. Traditionally, the horseshoes are hung above doors and are believed to keep house and home safe. Sailors used to hang horse shoes on the main mast of their ship. The open ends are usually points toward heaven. The closed bottom is supposed to ensure that the luck doesn't "run out." If the horse shoe is placed upside down, it symbolizes the Greek letter Omega and represents the transition from this world to the next.

Chimney sweeps are another good luck symbol for Germans. The chimney pointing upwards connects the two worlds. By cleaning the chimney, the sweep opens up the way to heaven and brings in a fresh wind. The cleaning of the chimney also ensures the safety of the house is therefore considered good luck, as it prevents possible fires.

The word "Glücksschwein" means "good-luck pig" in German. The pig already had an important meaning and was a symbol of luck in an-



cient Egypt or Syria. It was considered holy and therefore sacrificed to the gods. The Celts saw it as a symbol of the hereafter and made it the food of choice at religious celebrations. In Europe, pigs are an important meat and fat supplier. To have pork was considered good fortune and wealth. This is where the German phrase "Schwein haben" (to have pig) originated. It means you have good luck. Another root for the pig being a symbol of good luck could be that in old German card games the ace had the picture of a wild boar on it.

Another good-luck charm from the animal kingdom in Germany is the Lady Bug. This red bug with little black dots has been dedicated to the mother of God during the Middle Ages, hence its German name "Marienkafer" (Mary's bug). It is supposed to bring bad luck to hurt or even kill one of these little creatures.

German superstition also extends to food-related customs. In the olden days, the leftovers of the meal on New Years Eve were purposely left on the table until the morning of the New Year. This was a sign of plenty. Today, certain soups like lentils or peas served on New Years Eve or New Years day are supposed to bring this wealth and prosperity. My mother always prepares a soup with slices of potatoes in it. The slices represent coins, and the more you eat, the more money you will have the next year.

I hope these explanations have shed some light on German customs and superstitions for you. It doesn't really matter whether you believe in good-luck charms or fortune telling. Most Germans don't take it that serious to begin with. Often, it is only a fun tradition or a friendly gesture when one is presented with a good-luck charm for the New Year.

Have you ever wondered why Germans do certain things? I would welcome your questions and comments. Email me at martina.bias@us.army.mil, and I might be able to address one of your suggestions in one of my future columns.

German Cooking 101: Feuerzangenbowle

by Martina Bias
Special to the Training Times

To add some spice to the last weeks of the year and to warm you up during the cold winter months, I would like to offer you a special German treat: Feuerzangenbowle (fire-tong-punch), a warm, spiced wine punch known for almost 200 years and sometimes referred to as "Krambambuli."

This popular winter beverage has almost achieved cult status in Germany, partly because of its warming and intoxicating effects, but also because of the famous movie named after it.

Its spectacular presentation makes it a great conversation piece for a party. The focal point is the sugar cone drenched in rum which will treat you to a nice display of blue flames when lighted, as well as bits of molten, burning sugar dripping into the wine. The mixture of hot wine, rum, and sugar ensures an immediate feeling of warmth and relaxation for anyone who samples it.

A traditional German Holiday Punch Bowl includes a fire tong to hold the Zuckerhut (sugar cone) over the bowl opening, but you can improvise with a clean grid from a barbecue set that is laid across the punch bowl.

The movie with the same name as this sweet

drink dates from 1944 and is a German production. The plot of this classic film is based on the book *Die Feuerzangenbowle* by Heinrich Spoerl. The story starts with a group of distinguished people sitting around a Feuerzangenbowle. They start discussing the pranks and fun they had at school when it turns out that one of them, Dr. Johannes Pfeiffer (played by Heinz Rühmann), didn't attend a public school and never experienced these joys with his private teacher. In the mood brought about by the drink, they decide that the famous author is to be sent to a small town and to go to school there for some time. After changing his hair-style and shaving off his beard, Heinz Rühmann looks quite like the other pupils (surprising, considering he was 42 years old when the film was made). In the end, Dr. Pfeiffer attends this school, plays all the pranks and has an enormous amount of fun while also falling in love with a pupil from the nearby girls' school.

I hope that you will try this famous liquid holiday tradition with your friends some day. As the movie shows, you just never know what great and fun ideas it can give you.

I wish you Froehliche Weihnachten und ein Gesundes Neues Jahr (Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year).

Feuerzangenbowle

4 oranges
1 lemon
1 – 2 bottles (about 24 oz.) of rum (54 percent or at least 108 proof)
4 – 5 bottles of red wine (to avoid a massive hangover, don't skip on the quality of the wine)
4 whole cloves
1 stick of cinnamon
1 cone of sugar (about ½ pound of sugar molded into a cone, resembling the Sugar Loaf mountain)

A few weeks before you plan to serve the Bowle, peel all the fruit, separate the flesh and place the segments in a bowl. Add rum to cover the fruit, put a lid on the bowl, and let it sit until the day of the Feuerzangenbowle. If a weaker effect is desired, skip the soaking of the fruit. (the total amount of rum per 4-5 bottles of red wine should not exceed 24 oz. Do not add all the rum from the soaked fruits plus a whole bottle. Rather, if you soak the fruit, use that rum plus enough to equal about 24 oz altogether).

The day you plan to serve the drink, pour the wine into a big pot and add the cinnamon and the cloves. Add the (rum-soaked) fruit, (saving the



rum). Heat the mixture to a temperature at which it starts steaming. Put the kettle in the middle of your table so your guests can watch the ceremony. Place the Feuerzange (or grid) safely over the pot and place the cone on it horizontally. Use a large ladle to douse the cone with rum. When the cone is nicely soaked, dim the light and ignite the sugar.

Continue to pour rum onto the cone until it's fully molten and has disappeared into the wine. Remove the Feuerzange or grid once all the flames have died down and serve the steaming beverage in mugs.

Yield: about 10 servings

A Word of Caution

Be prepared for igniting the cone of sugar. Flames might reach a height of over one foot, so make sure the space above the pot is free. Most importantly, use a metal scoop and NEVER pour the rum straight from the bottle.

Do you have a favorite German dish you would like to recreate at home? You can email me at martina.bias@us.army.mil, and I might be able to feature your requested recipe in one of the future issues.



Girl Scout Troop 64 recently visited the German firemen at the Graf fire station, and presented them with Girl Scout cookies and home-baked Santa Claus cookies. The girl scouts are: (front row left to right) Darby and Delainy Trimble, Katelynn Daniels, Stephanie Bias (back row left to right) Alexis Brian, Mya Falcon, Delaney Keeler, Mikayla Davis, Michaela Lechwar.

Photo by Martina Bias

Girls and boys basketball season opener

Vilseck Falcons take on Mannheim Bisons, defeat Ansbach Cougars



Vilseck Falcons' Devon Douglas takes a charge against Bisons' player D'Juan Scales in the December 9th game at Memorial Gym.



Vilseck Falcons' Cathy DelaRosa charges past Bisons' Lauren Elder and prepares to shoot the ball.

Article and photos by Kathy Jordan
Training Times

The girls and boys basketball teams had their season opener at home against the Ansbach Cougars Dec. 2, and the Mannheim Bisons Dec. 10.

The games were played on Rose Barracks.
The Falcons played the Bisons at Memorial Gym.
The junior varsity Falcons boys' team defeated the Bisons 39 to 30. The Falcons led at half-time 23 to 9 and kept building up their score against the Bisons. In the third quarter, the Falcons led by 11 points and the Bisons never had a chance to recover and catch up in the fourth quarter.

Lead scorers for Vilseck: Dextra Johnson 19, Derek Schwarz 10 and Robert Wright 5; Mannheim: Anthony Cook 15, AJ Jarrett 9. Rebounds for Vilseck: Schwarz 9, Ronnie Turner 6 and Wright 4. Steals for Vilseck: Troy Whitehead 3.

The Falcons girls' junior varsity team faced off with the Bisons and were defeated 16 to 22. In the third quarter the score was tied 12 to 12. The Falcons hustled and executed plays, but the Bisons pulled ahead in the fourth quarter and won the game.

Lead scorer for Mannheim: Lauren Elder 11. Steals for Mannheim: Elder 8 and Trisha Smith 3. Leading rebounders for Mannheim: Jessica Naddin and Smith each had 5. Vilseck no stats available.

The Falcons boys' varsity team was defeated by the Bisons 54 to 42 in Saturday's game. The teams were evenly matched in scoring at the end of the second half with 19 points each. The Falcons tried to regain the lead in the third quarter, but the Bisons kept putting on the pressure. In the fourth quarter the Bisons made some offensive and defensive plays that helped them stay ahead in the ball game and win.

Lead scorers for Vilseck: Rojo and Lewis each had 8, Jones and Johnson each had 6 and Mike Klein had 4; Mannheim: Brown had 17, Andrew Cuffe had 8 and Scavvone and Gardner each had 7. Lead rebounders for Vilseck: Rojo had 7, Klein had 6 and Kollin Jordan and Derrick Jones each had 5; Mannheim: Gardner had 6. Assist for Vilseck: Klein and Lewis each had 2.

The Falcons girls' varsity team was defeated by the Bisons 37 to 13. The Falcons played a tough game, but the Bisons won the victory.

Lead scorers for Mannheim: Calvarias and Camps each had 12 and Green had 6. Lead rebounders for Mannheim: Camps and Calvarias had 9 each and Letia Williams 5. Steals for Mannheim: Jasmine Lee had 6. Vilseck no stats available.

In Dec. 9 action, the Vilseck Falcons boy's junior varsity team defeated the Mannheim Bisons 28 to 23. The Falcons took the lead in the second quarter and never looked back. The Falcons increased their lead in the third quarter and kept the pace going in the fourth. When the final buzzer sounded the Falcons had sealed the victory.

Leading scorers for Vilseck: Tre White 10, Troy Whitehead 6 and PJ Cruz and Robert Wright each had 4; Mannheim: Alvin Jarrett 7, Anthony Cook and Clifton Taylor each had 4. Rebounds for Vilseck: White 10, Wright 7, Devon Douglas, Derek Schwarz and Whitehead had 4 each.

The junior varsity girl's team defeated Mannheim 24-20. Lead scorers for Mannheim: Lauren Elder 8, Jalisha White 5 and Trisha Smith 4; Rebounds for Mannheim: White 7, Lauren Elder 3; Steals for Mannheim: Elder 4; Vilseck no stats available.

In the boys varsity game Mannheim defeated Vilseck 51 to 48. The Falcons and the Bisons played a very aggressive game, at the end of each quarter there were less than five points separating the two teams. In the fourth quarter with less than ten seconds remaining, the score was 49 to 48 in favor of the Bisons. The Bisons sealed the victory with a two point shot in the closing second of the game.

Top scorers for Vilseck: Derrick Jones 16, Kollin Jordan 14 and Jose Rojo 10; Mannheim: David Scavvone 14, Matt Brown 14 and Rickey Gardner 11. Rebounds for Vilseck: Jones 14, Jordan 10 and Tre White 6; Mannheim: Gardner had 9. Steals for Vilseck: Mike Klein had 5.



Vilseck Falcons' Mike Klein goes head-to-head with a towering wall of Bison defenders.

The Vilseck girl's varsity team lost to Mannheim 26 to 27. Mannheim lead scorers: Jasmine Lee 13 and Kelsey Calvarias 5. Mannheim lead rebounders: Jessica Green 9, Shnita Camps 7 and Calvarias and Lee each had 3. Steals for Mannheim: Calvarias had 6. Vilseck no stats available.

Basketball highlights

The Vilseck Falcons boy's varsity team faced the Ansbach Cougars Dec. 2 at Memorial Gym. The Falcons led the Cougars by a score of 25 to 20 at halftime. The Falcons increased their lead in the third quarter by 12 points, making the score 46 to 34 in their favor. In the fourth quarter the Falcons continued putting pressure on the Cougars and at the end of the game the scoreboard read Falcons 56 and Cougars 45.

Leading scorers for Vilseck: Chris Lewis 11, Jose Rojo 10, Derek Jones and Dextra Johnson had 8 points each; Ansbach: Tyler Sherman 16 and Zach Harman 12. Rebounds for Vilseck: Jones 10, Johnson and Rojo had 5 each and Mike Klein 3; Ansbach: Sherman had 10. Steals for Vilseck: Lewis 8, Rojo and Klein each had 4, and Johnson 3. Assist for Vilseck: Klein 6, Lewis and Rojo had 3 each and Kollin Jordan had 2.

Ansbach did not have a junior varsity boys' team.

Vilseck girls' varsity team defeated Ansbach 54 to 14. Leading scorers Ansbach: Kayla Edison 6 and Amber Mack 5; Vilseck no stats available.

Vilseck girls' junior varsity defeated Ansbach 43 to 3. Rebounds for Ansbach: Kariel Caldwell and Joshlyn Learn had 6 each and Jasmine Thibodaux had 4. Steals for Ansbach: Vanessa Dickens had 3. Vilseck no stats available.

Games for Saturday Dec. 3 were cancelled because of inclement weather.

Wrestling

The Falcons competed in Wuerzburg Dec. 3 and won matches in high school and middle school categories. In the 103-pound weight class Khiry Taylor had four wins and no losses. David Ferrer won two matches and lost one in the 145-pound weight class competition, and in the 140-pound weight class Allen Sligh won two matches and lost three.

In middle school competition Joe Hall won all three matches in the 112-pound weight class competition, followed by Brian Wehrer winning two and losing one in the 119-pound weight class division.



Photo by Kathy Jordan

More than 100 children from Vilseck Elementary School ran through the housing area on Dec. 14 during the school's Jingle Bell Run.